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KEY F:

THE ORIENTAL CONCEPTION OF ENJOYMENT.

THE idea entertained by the Orientals of pleasure has very little resemblance to ours. When in search of enjoyment we excite ourselves to action, shun solitude and quiet, and surround ourselves with noise and bustle, marvellous and thrilling sounds, colours brilliant and gay, forms of all beauty, everything, in fact, that can strike, and, as it were, irritate the senses: the Orientals, on the contrary, endeavour to relapse into perfect repose. Tranquillity has little charms for us except when we cannot attain it, whereas for them it is the first requisite of happiness. A soft *deewan* on which to recline, in a half-darkened room by day, and a dimly-lighted kiosque at night, with a cool breeze to fan the air, and the low voice of a singer, or the tinkling notes of some simple instrument at a little distance, rather to mark than to disturb the general stillness; a few grave companions, allowing at long intervals a solemn word or two to escape from amidst the snowy waves of their venerable beards; the soothing pipe, replenished in formal silence by a respectful slave; an occasional '*fingan*' of coffee: these are elements of keen enjoyment in the opinion of many a wealthy Muslim, and would not be exchanged for all the gorgeous and giddy amusements which all the capitals of Europe afford. Often, it is true, they are not found sufficient. Differences of age and temperament, varieties of fortune and taste, lead people to look for the same result amidst other impressions. But the state of mind coveted is always a kind of contemplative beatitude, expressed in Arabic by that untranslateable word, 'Keyf.'

It is easier to ridicule than to appreciate this said keyf. Travellers who merely pass through the country have never any opportunities of enjoying it; for it seems to require the preparation of a relaxing climate. Frames braced and invigorated by the keen air of the north are no more fitted to receive this kind of intoxication, than the mind of a grave political economist is capable of experiencing the maniacal excitement into which a howling derwish can throw himself almost at will. The most calm and indolent of Englishmen is restless and uneasy compared with the placid Egyptian in his moments of repose. It was long before I could feel, and therefore before I could understand, the pleasure of sitting huddled up for hour after hour in the same position in the corner of a divan, with a pipe in hand, perfectly indifferent to the flight of time, and perfectly careless of putting the passing moments to profit, exchanging now and then, in a low languid voice, with one or two companions, a brief remark, just sufficient to keep up the communication between us, and escape from the impression of complete solitude.

During the latter part of my residence in the East, I

had begun to relish this sort of thing occasionally, although active pursuits fortunately prevented me from becoming a complete Oriental. I admit the pleasure of such an existence, and can now understand why many Franks, fascinated by its mysterious charm, forget their household gods, and lingering near the banks of the Nile, dream away their whole lives in one continued state of keyf. But it is not the less true that this passion for reverie and unproductive contemplation, indulged in more or less by whole people, is a great obstacle in the way of its progress; and as long as the doctrine of Fatalism prevails to justify and encourage it, we may expect to see Mohammedan countries continuing in their present backward condition. As I have mentioned this doctrine, I may venture to remark that its pernicious influence in the ordinary affairs of human life has never been accurately estimated. It is certainly true that it sometimes produces great and admirable resignation after overwhelming catastrophes, and cooperates in preventing those violent accesses of despair which are so common with us. Suicide is unknown in Eastern countries, except among slaves. On the other hand, it checks improvement in the arts, and stands in the way of every kind of reform. 'As our fathers did, so do we;' 'what our fathers suffered, that must we suffer;' 'that which is ordained, it would be presumptuous to endeavour to alter.' Such are the arguments by which an Oriental usually meets every proposal of amelioration. Of course, if they were logical, and carried out their doctrine to its utmost consequences, the result would be perfect immobility; but they are not so consistent, and act upon the principle which they lay down only so far as to justify their mental indolence. I will add, that in spite of their affected resignation to the decrees of Fate, the natural instincts of man constantly get the upper hand. They seek refuge from those decrees when sickness befalls them, for example, in charms and incantations, as well as in the prescriptions of infidel doctors; but they will not take any means of avoiding disease, except those which are absolutely prescribed in their ritual. They will escape from a house if the roof threatens to fall in; but they will not study to improve their mode of architecture.

I once had a conversation with an Arab, whom I roused from a state of keyf to pester him with argument. I told him that it was criminal to pass so many hours of his life in both bodily and intellectual inaction; and succeeded at length in making him understand my meaning. He at first sought refuge in the pretence that he was elevating his mind by the contemplation of the unity of God; but he soon acknowledged that this was only true in a vague sense, and that he had been in a state of half-unconsciousness, with a few indistinct unconnected images slowly traversing his mind, forgetful

of everything that had passed, and indifferent to every thing that was to come. 'You were drunk!' said I. 'No,' said he; 'I was enjoying my keyf.' Whereupon, being perfectly roused, he began to make the apology of this condition, and endeavoured to show that it was the only consolation which man possessed for the evils he suffered in this world. At my observation that most of those evils existed only by man's sufferance, he smiled in pity, and said that all was ordained from above; that we could not modify one tittle the course of events, and had nothing to do but to submit passively, and take every opportunity of relapsing into the unconsciousness of keyf.

The reader has now some idea of the state of mind which the Orientals regard as the highest happiness realisable upon earth. Their modes of producing it are various. Some resort to the dangerous but expeditious method of smoking or eating *hashish*—a preparation of hemp-seed. *Hashashin* (the origin of our word assassin)—that is to say, men who indulge in this practice—are indeed not uncommon in Egypt, where I have known even Europeans occasionally thus degrade themselves. Not long before I left the country, a horrible incident occurred. There had been a party of these unhappy wretches collected in a coffee-house during what is called a *Fantasia*, which may mean either any ordinary amusement, or an orgie. Next morning the shop remained closed after the usual hour. The neighbours assembled, and knocked loudly, but got no answer. At length they burst open the door, and saw twelve bodies stretched on the divans on the floor. Seven were ascertained to be quite dead; two or three more died in the course of the day; whilst the remainder recovered, and related how they had swallowed pastilles containing *hashish*, sold to them by a pedlar from Constantinople. The dose was unusually strong, but was such as the still more depraved Stamhouli are accustomed to take.

Another and more vulgar class of men drink *arraki*—a spirit distilled from a variety of substances, but principally from dates. It is sometimes flavoured with mastic, and has not a very unpleasant taste. It is considered to be extremely prejudicial to the health, but is nevertheless swallowed in large quantities by the dancing-girls of all classes, as well as the dancing-boys and the dissipated frequenters of coffee-houses. The consumption of it must be great. It may be procured not only in the cities, but in almost every village of any importance. Almost all donkey-boys, many boatmen, and some servants, will drink spirits if offered to them by Europeans; and I remember a Sherif, or descendant of the Prophet, wearing a green turban, whom we met on the desert coast near the Maadieh, and who, after refusing to partake of the cup with us before witnesses, came and begged some cognac on the sly, and tossed it off *neat* with great *gusto*. Good wines are enjoyed in private by some wealthy Turks; and Ibrahim Pasha, it is said, was once found dead-drunk with champagne one morning under the sycamore-tree in a public avenue through his own grounds.

The classes I have hitherto mentioned, however, are exceptions to the general rule. The Muhammedan is, on the whole, very sober, and contents himself with the gentle exhilaration caused by coffee and pipes. The universal use of these stimulants in Egypt becomes less remarkable when we find that, as far as has hitherto been ascertained, they are perfectly innocuous there. I never heard of tobacco producing sickness as in Europe. For my own part, although I could not smoke at all on my arrival, I adopted this necessary accomplishment without the slightest inconvenience. It is almost universal in all Mohammedan countries; although at Siwah, in the Libyan Desert, I found that nearly all the inhabitants abstained, as from a vice. The Wahabis, a fanatical sect of Arabian reformers, prohibit smoking among other luxuries; but I was assured by a native trader, who professed to be familiar with Arabia, that they indulge to excess in coffee, which they never sweeten. He told me that they ground it with stone pestles in large

rude mortars, made of a peculiarly hard stone, and that it often produces in them a complete state of intoxication. 'This is their keyf.' Some of them, he said, smoke in secret; but this was merely an opinion of his own, and indicated that his lax practice was offended by their austerity.

There is one fact connected with smoking which is worth mentioning—namely, that in Ramadhan time, when the whole population fasts from sunrise to sunset, the hoisting of the flag at evening no sooner announces that the fasting time is over, than the ready-filled pipe is snatched up, and a few whiffs are taken, before either hunger or thirst is satisfied. A small cup of coffee succeeds, and then the solid food is devoured. I find it difficult to explain this, because it would appear more natural that, after a long day of hard labour under such privation, an intolerable thirst should exist. Probably habit is more imperious always in its demands than ordinary appetite; and it is not impossible that this practice of smoking, instead of eating and drinking at once, may have some effect in counteracting the evil effects of long abstinence.

I have now mentioned the every-day methods which the Arabs have of obtaining keyf. Collected in groups of two or three, or even alone in a corner, they seem, under the influence of the above stimulant, to be capable of isolating themselves for a time in imagination from the world, and surrounding themselves with agreeable thoughts. There is no nation more prone than they to build castles in the air. They are always making extravagant suppositions—representing themselves, for example, in possession of wonderful wealth or marvellous supernatural powers, by the aid of which they sometimes do the most ordinary things possible.

We were once dropping down one of the placid reaches of the Nile, very indifferent whether our boat advanced or stood still. The sail, lazily swelling, urged us gently along the side of a little island fringed with reeds, that rattled against the panes of our cabin. Over the banks, that shut us in like huge hedges, a few palms rose here and there in the distance, flecking the sky with spots of dark green. The water was steeped in all the brilliance of the heavens; a few aquatic birds stooped gently sometimes along the surface. The crew seemed to feel a sense of inexpressible enjoyment, and one of them producing a *darabukkah* or Arab tambourine, began to beat a tune, whilst another chanted a plaintive love-song; and we listened under the influence of coffee and pipes, and allowed ourselves to be soothed into a perfect state of keyf. Ahmed, our servant, came and sat down on his heels near us with his cup in hand, and after listening devoutly to the end, could not contain his satisfaction. No pleasure, he said, was equal to being on the Nile; and 'if he had five millions of guineas,' he would buy a boat, and live for ever in it! We said he might do the thing for much less; but he would not abate one jot of his supposition, and we were obliged to admit the five millions. His plan, at first, was to carry about the whole sum in the hold; but he afterwards consented to invest half of it in some English commercial house of acknowledged stability. He then said that he would procure the most beautiful woman in Egypt as his wife, with an eunuch to watch over her. This addition to his family drew on the necessity of having a second boat as a *harim*; and Ahmed took terrible anticipatory vengeance on every audacious wight who attempted to gain a glimpse of his beloved. We were a long time settling all these matters; and the evening had come tranquilly on in the midst of our speculations. The state of keyf now grew too perfect to allow of our continuing the conference, and relapsing into silence, we watched the red streak, and the yellow streak, and the gray streak, successively disappear, and the stars unfold their petals, and the moon come peering over the bank, revealing five or six ghost-like sails, gliding slowly down in our wake. How long this state continued, and whether reverie was succeeded by slumber, I know not; but a

loud chorus of voices, and the bumping of the boat against other boats, and the grating of its keel on the sandy bottom, and the splashing of the water, and the lights along shore, and, above all, the barking of dogs, told us that we had arrived, as the reader likewise has, without knowing it, at the decayed city of Er-Rashid.

This gives me an opportunity of describing another mode the Orientals have of producing *keyf*. We landed, and repaired to the coffee-house. It was a spacious building, surrounded by divans and shelves covered with *gozebs* and *shishahs*—two kinds of water-pipe. Some groups were collected here and there watching the game of *tab*; but we soon understood that there was another point of attraction in the neighbourhood, and that most of the idle folks had repaired thither. One of the entrances of the coffee-house led into a broad passage covered with trelliswork, supporting a huge grape-vine, through which the moonbeams worked their way, and fell in bright spots on the stone pavement below. On the opposite side was a kind of kiosque, from which sounds of merriment and laughter proceeded. We repaired thither, and found two or three Turks sitting smoking their pipes in state, whilst a motley crowd of idlers squatted or stood round in a ring. The point of attraction was a poor fellow, deaf and dumb, playing a game with a waggish soldier. The latter held a long piece of cotton-wool in his mouth, and the deaf man was trying to take it from him with his teeth. The various incidents of this contest—the wise looks and rapid movements of the soldier, and the awkward attempts and disappointed whine of the infirm one—seemed to afford infinite amusement to the whole company, most of whom were smoking, or drinking coffee. The principal Turk—no less a person than the governor of Rosetta himself—perceiving two strangers, ordered seats and coffee to be brought to us; a courtesy which we duly acknowledged by laying our hands to our breasts. Our arrival, however, did not interrupt the sport, if sport it can be called, which soon led to some exhibitions of real or affected anger on the part of the actors. We left them in about half an hour; but for some time after could hear from the cabin of our boat, moored close by, occasional exclamations of pleasure and bursts of laughter, which showed that these worthy Mualims were not sensible of the monotony of their amusement.

Exhibitions of dancing-girls were formerly most popular among this keyf-loving people; but the tribe of Ghawazeh has been banished from Lower Egypt; and although many dancing-women are still to be found exercising their calling illicitly in the villages, the inhabitants of the great towns can rarely indulge in such a luxury. The displays of the *khawals*, or dancing-boys, are substituted; and it is only on certain festive occasions that the *awalim*, or female singers, imitate the performances of the Ghawazeh before the women; whilst the men listen to their songs from behind a screen, or through an open window. The accomplishments of the awalim do not necessarily include a knowledge of dancing; but since the exile of the Ghawazeh, many of them have emulated the renown of their predecessors.

Singing is very general in the coffee-houses, scarcely one of which is without some professional attendant, who lives on the few para pieces, &c., which the poorest Arab will liberally bestow on whoever contributes to produce his darling state of *keyf*. Some of these performers have fine voices when young, but their powers do not last for many years. Whether it be from over-exertion at first, or want of cultivation, few seem to acquire a reputation of long-standing. Two or three musicians often accompany the singer, who generally occupies an elevated seat outside the door; whilst the audience not unfrequently nearly fills up the part of the street opposite—all sitting on benches or seats made of palm branches. After a few stanzas, the performer begins to throw his head about as if in a state of ecstasy, his eyes all the while ‘in a fine frenzy rolling.’ He assists his voice by forming a kind of trumpet with his left

hand half round his mouth. Every now and then the crowd expresses its admiration by ejaculating in a sort of deep chorus the word ‘Allâh!’ These ejaculations become more and more frequent as the song proceeds, and at length follow hard upon every equivoque, every impassioned expression, every long-drawn and voluptuous quaver. The audience associates itself completely with the enthusiasm of the performer. A collection is usually made at the moment of greatest excitement.

Story-telling is not so common an entertainment as singing, but it prevails to a considerable extent. The romances related are often very amusing, and set off with all kind of picturesque gestures. The reciters are divided into various classes, each of which confines itself to the relation of a particular kind of adventures. It is not common to hear the stories of the ‘Thousand-and-One Nights,’ but I was present once at the telling of the story of the ‘Sage Dûbare’ in a coffee-house near the mosque of Abn-l-Abbas at Alexandria. Many Arabs who are not professional possess extensive repertoires of tales and anecdotes, which they are fond of relating one to the other; and the incidents are often well put together, and very interesting. However, I will not at present diverge into this subject, having given, I trust, a tolerably correct idea of the mental state which the Egyptians covet above all things, and call ‘pleasure,’ as well as their various modes of producing it.

EXPERIENCES OF A BARRISTER.

ESTHER MASON.

ABOUT forty years ago, Jabez Woodford, a foreman of shipwrights in the Plymouth dockyard, whilst carelessly crossing one of the transverse beams of a seventy-four gun-ship, building in that arsenal, missed his footing, fell to the bottom of the hold of the huge vessel, and was killed on the spot. He left a widow and one child—a boy seven years of age, of placid, endearing disposition, but weak intellect—almost in a state of destitution. He had been a coarse-tempered, improvident man; and like too many of his class, in those days at least, dissipated the whole of his large earnings in present sensuous indulgence, utterly careless or unmindful of the future. Esther Woodford, who, at the time of her husband’s death, scarcely numbered five-and-twenty years, was still a remarkably comely, as well as interesting, gentle-mannered person; and moreover had, for her station in life, received a tolerable education. Her rash, ill-assorted marriage with Woodford had been hastily contracted when she was barely seventeen years of age, in consequence of a jealous pique which she, for some silly reason or other, had conceived regarding Henry Mason, an intelligent, young seafaring man, of fair prospects in life, and frank disposition, with whom she had for some time previously, as the west-country phrase has it, ‘kept company,’ and who was, moreover, tenderly attached to her. Esther’s married life was one long repentance of the rash act; and the severance of the tie which bound her to an ungenial mate—after the subsidence of the natural horror and compassion excited by the sudden and frightful nature of the catastrophe—must have been felt as a most blessed relief. A few weeks afterwards, she accepted an asylum with her brother-in-law, Davies, a market-gardener in the vicinity of Plymouth, where, by persevering industry with her needle, and thrifty helpfulness in her sister’s household duties, she endeavoured to compensate her kind-hearted relatives for the support of herself and helpless, half-witted child. Mason she had never seen since the day previous to her marriage; but she knew he was prospering in the busy world, and that, some time before her husband’s death, he had been ap-

pointed chief-mate in a first-class merchant-ship trading to the Pacific. He had sailed about a fortnight previous to that event; and now, ten lazy months having slowly floated past, the lover of her youth, with whom, in that last sunny day of her young life—how distant did it seem, viewed through the long intervening vista of days and nights of grief and tears!—she had danced so joyously beneath the flowering chestnut-trees, was once more near her; and it was—oh happiness!—no longer a sin to think of him—no longer a crime to recall and dwell upon the numberless proofs of the deep affection, the strong love, he had once felt for her. Once felt! Perhaps even now!—How swiftly had the intelligence communicated by her sympathising sister tinted with bright hues the dark curtain of the future!

'And yet,' murmured poor Esther, the flush of hope fading as suddenly as it had arisen, as with meek sad eyes she glanced at the reflection of her features in the small oval glass suspended above the mantelpiece—'I almost doubt, Susy, dear, if he would recognise me; even if old feelings and old times have not long since faded from his memory'

'Stuff and trumpery about fading away!' broke in Mrs Davies. 'Henry Mason is the same true-hearted man he was eight years ago; and as a proof that he is, just read this letter, which I promised him to give you. There, don't go falling into a flusteration; don't now, Esther, and to-morrow market-day and all! Don't cry, Esther,' she added vehemently, but at the same time sobbing furiously herself, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck: 'but perhaps—perhaps it will do us good, both of us!'

It may be necessary to state that I owe the foregoing particulars to the interest felt by my wife—herself a native of beautiful Devon—in the fortunes of this humble household. Esther was her foster-sister; and it happened that just at this period, it being vacation-time, we were paying a visit to a family in the neighbourhood. A few hours after the receipt of the welcome letter, my wife chanced to call on Esther relative to some fancy-needlework; and on her return, I was of course favoured with very full and florid details of this little bit of cottage romance; the which I, from regard to the reader, have carefully noted down, and as briefly as possible expressed.

We met Henry Mason with his recovered treasure on the following evening; and certainly a more favourable specimen of the vigorous, active, bold-featured, frank-spoken British seaman I never met with. To his comparatively excellent education—for which I understood he was indebted to his mother, a superior woman, who, having fallen from one of the little heights of society, had kept a school at Plymouth—in addition to his correct and temperate habits, he was indebted for the rapid advance—he was but a few months older than Esther—he had obtained in the merchant service. The happiness which beamed upon Esther's face did not appear to be of the exuberant, buoyant character that kindled the ruddy cheek and ran over at the bright, honest eyes of the hardy sailor: there seemed to mingle with it a half-doubting, trembling apprehensiveness; albeit it was not difficult to perceive that, sorrowfully as had passed her noon of prime, an 'Indian summer' of the soul was rising upon her brightened existence, and already with its first faint flushes lighting up her meek, doubting eyes, and pale, changing countenance. Willy, her feeble-minded child, frisked and gambolled by their side; and altogether, a happier group than they would, I fancy, have been difficult to find in all broad England.

The next week they were married; and one of the partners in the firm by which Mason was employed

happening to dine with us on the day of the wedding, the conversation turned for a few minutes on the bridegroom's character and prospects.

'He has the ring of true metal in him,' I remarked; 'and is, I should suppose, a capital seaman?'

'A first-rate one,' replied Mr Roberts. 'Indeed so high is my father's opinion of him, that he intends to confer upon him the command of a fine brig now building for us in the Thames, and intended for the West India trade. He possesses also singular courage and daring. Twice, under very hazardous circumstances, he has successfully risked his life to save men who had fallen overboard. He is altogether a skilful, gallant seaman.'

'Such a man,' observed another of the company, 'might surely have aspired higher than to the hand of Esther Woodford, dove-eyed and interesting as she may be?'

'Perhaps so,' returned Mr Roberts a little curtly; 'though he, it seems, could not have thought so. Indeed it is chiefly of simple-hearted, chivalrous-minded men like Mason that it can be with general truth observed—

'On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.'

The subject then dropped, and it was a considerable time afterwards, and under altogether altered circumstances, when the newly-married couple once more crossed my path in life.

It was about eight months after his marriage—that he had been profitably enough employed in the interim—that Henry Mason, in consequence of the welcome announcement that the new brig was at last ready for his captain and cargo, arrived in London to enter upon his new appointment.

'These lodgings, Esther,' said he, as he was preparing to go out, soon after breakfast, on the morning after his arrival, 'are scarcely the thing; and as I, like you, am a stranger in Cockney-land, I had better consult some of the firm upon the subject before we decide upon permanent ones. In the meantime, you and Willy must mind and keep in doors when I am not with you, or I shall have one or other of you lost in this great wilderness of a city. I shall return in two or three hours. I will order something for dinner as I go along: I have your purse. Good-by: God bless you both.'

Inquiring his way every two or three minutes, Mason presently found himself in the vicinity of Tower Stairs. A scuffle in front of a public-house attracted his attention; and his ready sympathies were in an instant enlisted in behalf of a young sailor, vainly struggling in the grasp of several athletic men, and crying lustily to the gaping bystanders for help. Mason sprang forward, caught one of the assailants by the collar, and hurled him with some violence against the wall. A fierce outcry greeted this audacious interference with gentlemen who, in those good old times, were but executing the law in a remarkably good old manner. Lieutenant Donnaghen, a somewhat celebrated snapper-up of loose mariners, emerged upon the scene; and in a few minutes was enabled to exult in the secure possession of an additional prize in the unfortunate Henry Mason, who, too late, discovered that he had embroiled himself with a *pressgang*! Desperate, frenzied were the efforts he made to extricate himself from the peril in which he had rashly involved himself. In vain! His protestations that he was a mate, a captain, in the merchant service, were unheeded or mocked at.

To all his remonstrances he only got the professional answer—'His majesty wants you, and that is enough; so come along, and no more about it.'

Bruised, exhausted, almost mad, he was borne off in triumph to a boat, into which he was thrust with several others, and swiftly rowed off to a receiving-ship in the river. Even there his assertions and protestations were of no avail. Nothing but an Admiralty order, the officer in command candidly told him, should effect his

liberation. His majesty was in need of seamen; and he was evidently too smart a one to be deprived of the glory of serving his country. 'You must therefore,' concluded the officer, as he turned laughingly upon his heel, 'do as thousands of other fine fellows have been compelled to do—"grin and bear it." In about three weeks from the date of his impressment Mason found himself serving in the Mediterranean on board the 'Active' frigate, Captain Alexander Gordon, without having been permitted one opportunity of communicating with the shore. This was certainly very sharp, but it was not the less very common practice in those great days of triumphant battles by land and sea.

Very drearily passed the time with the bereaved wife. Her husband had promised to send home something for dinner, and various groceries; yet hour after hour went past, and nothing arrived. Morning flushed into noon, day faded to twilight, and still the well-known and always eager step sounded not upon the stairs! What could have detained him from his wife, shut up, imprisoned, as it were, in that hot, hurrying, stifling city? She feared to listen to the suggestions of her boding heart; and with feverish restlessness ran out upon the landing, and peered over the stairs every time a knock or ring was heard at the street-door. This strange behaviour was, it seems, noticed by the landlady of the lodging-house, and injuriously interpreted. A knock came to the door, and that person entered to know at what time *Mrs —*, she had forgotten the young woman's name, expected the dinner, she, the landlady, had undertaken to cook.

Esther timidly replied that her husband had promised to return in two or three hours at latest; and that she did not comprehend his continued absence—was indeed quite alarmed about it—

"Your husband!" said the woman, glancing insolently at Esther's figure. "Are you sure he *is* your husband?"

The hot blood suffused the temples of the indignant wife as she said, "This apartment, madam, I believe is mine?"

"Oh, certainly, as long as you can pay for it;" and rudely slamming the door, the landlady departed.

The long wretched night at last over, Esther rose with the light; and after giving her son his breakfast from the remains of that of the day before, set off with him to the place of business of the Messrs Roberts. It was early, and one clerk only had as yet arrived at the office. He informed her that Mr Henry Mason had not been seen, and that the partners were greatly annoyed about it, as his immediate presence was absolutely necessary.

Stunned, terrified, bewildered by the frightful calamity which she believed had befallen her, she felt convinced that her husband had been entrapped and murdered for the sake of the money he had about him: the wretched woman tottered back to her lodgings, and threw herself on the bed in wild despair. What was to be done for food even for her boy? Her husband had not only his pocket-book with him containing his larger money, but had taken her purse! She was alone and penniless in a strange city! The hungry wailings of her wileless child towards evening at length aroused her from the stupor of despair into which she had fallen. The miserable resource of pawning occurred to her: she could at least, by pledging a part of her wardrobe, procure sustenance for her child till she could hear from her sister; and with trembling hands she began arranging a bundle of such things as she could best spare, when the landlady abruptly entered the room, with a peremptory demand—as her husband was not returned, and did not appear likely to do so—for a month's rent in advance, that being the term the apartments were engaged for. The tears, entreaties, expostulations of the miserable wife were of no avail. Not one article, the woman declared, should leave her house till her claim was settled. She affected to doubt, perhaps really did so, that Esther was married; and hinted coarsely at an enforcement of the laws against persons who had no

visible means of subsistence. In a paroxysm of despair, the unhappy woman rushed out of the house; and accompanied by her hungry child, again sought the counting-house of the Messrs Roberts. She was now as much too late as she had been too early in the morning: the partners and clerks had gone, and she appears to have been treated with some rudeness by the porter, who was closing the premises when she arrived. Possibly the wildness of her looks, and the incoherence of her speech and manner, produced an impression unfavourable to her. Retracing her steps—penniless, hungry, sick at heart—she thought, as she afterwards declared, that she recognised my wife in one of the numerous ladies seated before the counters of a fashionable shop in one of the busiest thoroughfares. She entered, and not till she approached close to the lady discovered her mistake. She turned despairingly away; when a piece of rich lace, lying apparently unheeded on the counter, met her eye, and a dreadful suggestion crossed her fevered brain: here at least was the means of procuring food for her wailing child. She glanced hastily and fearfully round. No eye, she thought, observed her; and, horror of horrors! a moment afterwards she had concealed the lace beneath her shawl, and with tottering feet was hastily leaving the shop. She had not taken half-a-dozen steps when a heavy hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a voice, as of a serpent hissing in her ear, commanded her to restore the lace she had stolen. Transfixed with shame and terror, she stood rooted to the spot, and the lace fell on the floor.

"Fetch an officer," said the harsh voice, addressing one of the shopmen.

"No—no—no!" screamed the wretched woman, falling on her knees in wild supplication. "For my child's sake—in mercy of the innocent babe as yet unborn— pity and forgive me!"

The harsh order was iterated; and Esther Mason, fainting with shame and agony, was conveyed to the prison in Giltspur Street. The next day she was fully committed to Newgate on the capital charge of privately stealing in a shop to the value of five pounds. A few hours after her incarceration within those terrible walls, she was prematurely delivered of a female child.

I have no moral doubt whatever, I never have had, that at the time of the committal of the felonious act, the intellect of Esther Mason was disordered. Any other supposition is inconsistent with the whole tenor of her previous life and character. 'Lead us not into temptation' is indeed the holiest, because the humblest prayer.

Three weeks had elapsed before the first intimation of these events reached me, in a note from the chaplain of Newgate, an excellent, kind-hearted man, to whom Mrs Mason had confided her sad story. I immediately hastened to the prison; and in a long interview with her, elicited the foregoing statement. I readily assured her that all which legal skill could do to extricate her from the awful position in which she stood, the gravity of which I did not affect to conceal, should be done. The offence with which she was charged had supplied the scaffold with numberless victims; and tradesmen were more than ever clamorous for the stern execution of a law which, spite of experience, they still regarded as the only safeguard of their property. My wife was overwhelmed with grief; and in her anxiety to save her unhappy foster-sister, sought, without my knowledge, an interview with the prosecutor, in the hope of inducing him not to press the charge. Her efforts were unavailing. He had suffered much, he said, from such practices, and was "upon principle" determined to make an example of every offender he could catch. As to the plea that the husband had been forcibly carried off by a pressgang, it was absurd; for what would become of the property of tradesmen if the wife of every sailor so entrapped were to be allowed to plunder shops with impunity? This magnificent reasoning was of course

unanswerable; and the rebuked petitioner abandoned her bootless errand in despair. Mears Roberts, I should have mentioned, had by some accident discovered the nature of the misfortune which had befallen their officer, and had already made urgent application to the Admiralty for his release.

The Old Bailey sessions did not come on for some time: I, however, took care to secure at once, as I did not myself practise in that court, the highest talent which its bar afforded. Willy, who had been placed in a workhouse by the authorities, we had properly taken care of till he could be restored to his mother; or, in the event of her conviction, to his relatives in Devonshire.

The sessions were at last on: a 'true bill' against Esther Mason for shoplifting, as it was popularly termed, was unhesitatingly found, and with a heavy heart I wended my way to the court to watch the proceedings. A few minutes after I entered, Mr Justice Le Blanc and Mr Baron Wood, who had assisted at an important case of stockjobbing conspiracy, just over, left the bench: the learned recorder being doubtless considered quite equal to the trial of a mere capital charge of theft.

The prisoner was placed in the dock; but try as I might, I could not look at her. It happened to be a calm bright summer day; the air, as if in mockery of those death-sessions, humming with busy, lusty life; so that, sitting with my back to the prisoner, I could, as it were, read her demeanour in the shadow thrown by her figure on the opposite sun-lit wall. There she stood, during the brief moments which sealed her earthly doom, with downcast eyes and utterly dejected posture; her thin fingers playing mechanically with the flowers and sweet-scented herbs spread scantily before her. The trial was very brief: the evidence, emphatically conclusive, was confidently given, and vainly cross-examined. Nothing remained but an elaborate *ad misericordiam* excusative defence, which had been prepared by me, and which the prisoner begged her counsel might be allowed to read. This was of course refused; the recorder remarking, they might as well allow counsel for felons to address juries, as read defences; and that, as every practical man knew, would be utterly subversive of the due administration of justice. The clerk of the court would read the paper, if the prisoner felt too agitated to do so. This was done; and very vilely done. The clerk, I daresay, read as well as he was able; but old, near-sighted, and possessed of anything but a clear enunciation, what could be expected? The defence, so read, produced not the slightest effect either on the court or jury. The recorder briefly commented on the conclusiveness of the evidence for the prosecution; and the jury, in the same brief, business-like manner, returned a verdict of Guilty.

'What have you to say?' demanded the clerk, 'why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon you, according to law?'

The shadow started convulsively as the terrible words fell from the man's lips; and I saw that the suddenly-upraised eyes of the prisoner were fastened on the face of the fearful questioner. The lips, too, appeared to move; but no sound reached my ears.

'Speak, woman,' said the recorder, 'if you have anything to urge before sentence is pronounced.'

I started up, and turning to the prisoner, besought her in hurried accents to speak. 'Remind them of the infant at your breast—your husband!—'

'Who is that conferring with the prisoner?' demanded the judge in an angry voice.

I turned, and confronted him with a look as cold and haughty as his own. He did not think proper to pursue the inquiry further; and after muttering something about the necessity of not interrupting the proceedings of the court, again asked the prisoner if she had anything to urge.

'Not for myself—not for my sake,' at last faintly murmured the trembling woman; 'but for that of my

poor dear infant—my poor witless boy! I do not think, sir, I was in my right mind. I was starving. I was friendless. My husband, too, whom you have heard!—She stopped abruptly; a choking sob struggled in her throat; and but for the supporting arm of one of the turnkeys, she would have fallen to the ground.

'Unhappy, guilty woman,' said the recorder, with the coolness of a demon, 'the plea of insanity you would set up is utterly untenable. Your husband, it seems, is serving his majesty in the royal navy; defending his country, whilst his wife was breaking its laws, by the commission of a crime which, but for the stern repression of the law, would sap the foundations of the security of property, and—'

I could endure no more. The atmosphere of the court seemed to stifle me; and I rushed for relief into the open air. Before, however, I had reached the street, a long, piercing scream informed me that the learned judge had done his duty.

No effort was spared during the interval which elapsed previous to the recorder presenting his report to the privy-council—a peculiar privilege at that time attached to the office—to procure a mitigation of the sentence. A petition, setting forth the peculiar circumstances of the case, was carefully prepared; and by the indefatigable exertions of an excellent Quaker gentleman—who, as he is still alive, and might not choose to have his name blazoned to the world, I will call William Friend—was soon very numerously signed. The prosecutor, however, obstinately refused to attach his name to the document; and the absence of his signature—so strangely did men reason on such matters in those days—would, it was feared, weigh heavily against the success of the petition. The amiable and enlightened Sir Samuel Romilly not only attached his name, but aided us zealously by his advice and influence. In short, nothing was omitted that appeared likely to attain the desired object.

Two days before the petition was to be forwarded to the proper quarter, Henry Mason arrived in England, the exertions of his employers having procured his discharge. The 'Active' was one of Captain Hoste's squadron, which obtained the celebrated victory off Lissa, over the Franco-Venetian fleet commanded by Admiral Dobourdieu. Henry Mason, it appeared by the testimonials of the captain and officers of his ship, had greatly distinguished himself in the action. We enclosed these papers with the petition; and then, having done all in our power, awaited with anxious impatience the result of the recorder's report. It was announced to me, as I was sitting somewhat later than usual at chambers, by Mr William Friend. The judgment to die was confirmed! All our representations had not sufficed to counterbalance the supposed necessity of exhibiting terrible examples of the fate awaiting the perpetrators of an offence said to be greatly on the increase. Excellent William Friend wept like a child as he made the announcement.

There are many persons alive who recollect this horrible tragedy—this national disgrace—this act of gross barbarity on the part of the great personage, who, first having carried off the poor woman's husband, left her to die for an act the very consequence of that robbery. Who among the spectators can ever forget that heartrending scene—the hangman taking the baby from the breast of the wretched creature just before he put her to death! But let us not rake up these terrible reminiscences. Let us hope that the *true* guilty are forgiven. And let us take consolation from reflecting that this event led the great Romilly to enter on his celebrated career as a reformer of the criminal law.

The remains of Esther Mason were obtained from the Newgate officials, and quietly interred in St Sepulchre's churchyard. A plain slab, with her name only plainly chiselled upon it, was some time afterwards placed above the grave. A few years ago I attended a funeral in the same graveyard; and after a slight search, discovered

the spot. The inscription, though of course much worn, was still quite legible.

I had not seen Henry Mason since his return; but I was glad to hear from Mr William Friend that, after the first passionate burst of rage and grief had subsided, he had, apparently at least, thanks to the tender and pious expostulations of his wife—with whom, by the kind intervention of the sheriffs, he was permitted long and frequent interviews—settled down into calmness and resignation. One thing only he would not bear to hear even from her, and that was any admission that she had been guilty of even the slightest offence. A hint of the kind, however unintentional, would throw him into a paroxysm of fury; and the subject was consequently in his presence studiously avoided.

A few days after the execution, Mr William Friend called on me just after breakfast, accompanied by the bereaved husband. I never saw so changed a man. All the warm kindness of his nature had vanished, and was replaced by a gloomy fierce austerity, altogether painful to contemplate.

'Well, sir,' said he, as he barely touched my professed hand, 'they have killed her, you see, spite of all you could say or do. It much availed me, too, that I had helped to win their boasted victories;' and he laughed with savage bitterness.

'Henry—Henry!' exclaimed William Friend in a reproving accent.

'Well, well, sir,' rejoined Mason impatiently, 'you are a good man, and have of course your own notions on these matters: I also have mine. Or perhaps you think it is only the blood of the rich and great which, shed unjustly, brings forth the iron harvest? Forgive me,' he added, checking himself. 'I respect you both; but my heart is turned to stone. You do not know—none ever knew but I—how kind, how loving, how gentle was that poor long-suffering girl.'

He turned from us to hide the terrible agony which convulsed him.

'Henry,' said Mr Friend, taking him kindly by the hand, 'we pity thee sincerely, as thou knowest; but thy bitter, revengeful expressions are unchristian, sinful. The authorities whom thou, not for the first time, raised on so wildly, acted, be sure of it, from a sense of duty; a mistaken one, in my opinion, doubtless; still—'

'Say no more, sir,' interrupted Mason. 'We differ in opinion upon the subject. And now, gentlemen, farewell. I wished to see you, sir, before I left this country for ever, to thank you for your kind, though fruitless exertions. Mr Friend has promised to be steward for poor Willy of all I can remit for his use. Farewell. God bless you both!' He was gone!

War soon afterwards broke out with the United States of America, and Mr Friend discovered that one of the most active and daring officers in the Republican navy was Henry Mason, who had entered the American service in the maiden name of his wife; and that the large sums he had remitted from time to time for the use of Willy, were the produce of his successful depredations on British commerce. The instant Mr Friend made the discovery, he refused to pollute his hands with monies so obtained, and declined all further agency in the matter. Mason, however, contrived to remit through some other channel to the Davies's, with whom the boy had been placed; and a rapid improvement in their circumstances was soon visible. These remittances ceased about the middle of 1814; and a twelve-month after the peace with America, we ascertained that Henry Mason had been killed in the battle on Lake Champlain, where he had distinguished himself, as everywhere else, by the reckless daring and furious hate with which he fought against the country which, in his unreasoning frenzy, he accused of the murder of his wife. He was recognised by one of his former messmates in the 'Active,' who, conveyed a prisoner on board the American commander Macdonough's ship,

recognised him as he lay stretched on the deck, in the uniform of an American naval officer; his countenance, even in death, wearing the same stormy defiant expression which it assumed on the day that his beloved Esther perished on the scaffold.

GOSSIP FROM LONDON.

We have progressed since my last. The Queen's Birthday is over; that anniversary on which mail-guards, postmen, and official understrappers make their appearance in new coats, rejoicing in all the brightness of virgin scarlet. 'Derby Day,' too, has come and gone; than which none causes so much stir and locomotion among metropolitan lieges, its gulf of vivid excitement now converted into a cud of mingled bitter and sweet for adventurers to chew. In the back-greens of law-courts, and other such crafty precincts, the grass and shrubs are emulating their country kindred; and our squares look summer-like in their foliage, which has at last come forth; while drowsy folk indulge in unwonted libations, reminding us that midsummer is at hand.

There are so many things to talk about, that I hardly know where to begin; however, the sale at Gore House will serve as well to lead off with as any other *quid-nunc*. Few events of late years have created greater sensation in the world of *ton* than the dispersion of Lady Blessington's effects by the hammer; and during the view week, the road at Kensington was beset by long lines of carriages and pedestrians, all crowding to the centre of attraction. The sight was one well worth seeing; so numerous were the rarities and curiosities, and so tasteful the luxurious elegance. It is said that connoisseurs are disappointed that the portrait of her ladyship by Lawrence, on which Byron wrote a poem, sold for no more than three hundred and sixty guineas—poet and painter alike at a discount. But to particularise would demand whole pages; so I shall just remark that Gore House has seen strange contrasts in its occupiers—first the famous Whitbread, then Lady Blessington, and now, so says rumour, about to pass into the possession of a Quaker M.P.

I need hardly tell you that the Royal Academy exhibition is the grand spectacle of the day; but, in addition to this, there are so many sights and *rénovations*, that it is a wonder how people find time to 'do' them all. Whatever may be thought about the world growing wiser, there can be little doubt that it grows cleverer, at the industrial-art exhibition of the Society of Arts, the soirées of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and of Lord Rosse, the new president of the Royal Society, fully evidence. It is pretty well known that the late president, Lord Northampton, gave the soirées at his own residence; but those of his successor have been held in a suite of rooms in Somerset House. Of the four which take place during the season, three are now over; from five to six hundred gentlemen—titled and untitled, scientific, philosophical, and literary—having 'assisted,' as the French say, at each. You know of course that on such occasions it is customary to bring together models and specimens of new inventions and works of art, which, if the refreshments fail to do so, may give the visitors something interesting to talk about. Some of these things will bear talking about on paper, if you can put up with general description instead of technicalities. Foremost I may enumerate the working models of his two famous telescopes, brought over from Ireland by Lord Rosse. That of the 'monster telescope' especially conveys an accurate and satisfactory notion of the huge instrument to those whose opportunities do not admit of their taking a journey to Castle Birr to see the giant. We are promised ere long some account of its exploits. Then, commanding itself to all interested in navigation, comes a model of Mitchell's screw-pile lighthouse, as erected on the Maplin sand. A cause of astonishment to the uninitiated in this, as in the case of the screw-propeller, is the apparent inadequacy of the screw to its office. It consists of a single disk of metal adjusted near

the lower extremity of the pile, whereby a sandbank may be penetrated, and the timber afterwards fixed in its place. The 'screw mooring' also exhibited is similar in construction: it may be twisted into any part of a shoal or bed of a river, where its powerful 'bite' affords secure hold for the attached buoy. In juxtaposition with such objects as these, you would see choice specimens of Daguerreotype; a triptych of the sixteenth century, dear to antiquaries; Varley's rotating-winch double-action air-pump; Clement's apparatus for making five hogheads of sugar per diem; or Hill's potato-crusher. Next in order are several beautiful designs intended to show the adaptability of iron to architectural purposes: the elegance and variety of the combinations are indisputable; but are iron arcades and houses suited to our English climate?

Gutta-percha again: specimens of wire coated with the Protean material, giving rise to projects for economical telegraphs. The wires raised on poles, as at present in use, are, as shown by experience, exposed to atmospheric disturbances and other casualties. You will remember the throwing down of miles of wire by the weight of accumulated snow, on the South-Eastern Railway at the beginning of this year. It is proposed to avoid such accidents, by burying a coated wire underground, carrying it across the country independent of lines of rail. This may be laid down for £30 or £60 per mile; in the latter case, the gutta-percha coating is in turn braided or 'served' with rope, and covered with marine glue. In Germany they content themselves by giving a coat of paint only to the gutta-percha; and according to the statements, there are 400 miles so prepared laid down on one of the lines in that country. If carried into execution as proposed, we shall be able to send you a message to Edinburgh at less than one-half of the present charges.

While on the subject of gutta-percha, a few words may very well be given to Mr Whishaw's inventions: among these are speaking-tubes, to supersede bells in private houses or offices. So extraordinary are the conducting powers of this new product, that a whisper can be conveyed to long distances; and it is obvious that much trouble will be saved by a person being able to state his wants without the preliminary delay of a bell-summons. The cost is not great; seeing that the tubes, with terminals or mouth-pieces, can be supplied at 8d. per foot. But we are, it seems, to be able to speak at a distance without any connecting tube at all; across the inner quadrangle of a building, for instance, by means of large concave gutta-percha reflectors, fixed, one opposite to the other, on each side of the court, at an upper window, if required, each having a short tube attached, through which the message is spoken. By experiment, the inventor has ascertained that a whisper can be heard at a distance of forty feet; and he anticipates hearing a loud-spoken tone from a quarter of a mile. Such an instrument has long been desired on railways during repairs, so as to avoid the delay which now occurs in sending a messenger from one gang of workmen to another. In this case each reflector would be mounted on a stand similar to that of a theodolite; and thus the portable telephone would be available where the telegraph, as at present arranged, does not admit of application. The instrument might be so fixed at each end of a tunnel, that the attendants at either extremity could communicate without leaving their boxes.

Perhaps you will say I am dwelling too long on these soirées; but I cannot leave the subject without noticing two other models, which you will very likely consider the most noteworthy of all. The first is Mr Appold's 'centrifugal pump for draining marshes,' &c.; and a most ingenious adaptation it is. You have heard of the turbine—a small box water-wheel possessing extraordinary capabilities for work. Well, Mr Appold's model contains such a wheel, made of tin, a little thicker, but not larger, than a halfpenny. This is fitted at the bottom of a square tube dipping into a small cistern

containing water, which may represent a lake, &c. The little wheel being made to rotate with great velocity, throws up water rapidly into the tube above itself, until it overflows in a continuous stream at the top, and the volume of this stream is such as to deliver eight gallons in a minute; and on applying a nozzle, the stream is driven to a distance of twenty feet. This, you will say, is a marvellous effect from so apparently insignificant a cause; but a wheel, about fifteen inches diameter, exhibited at the same time, will deliver 1800 gallons per minute: it requires, however, to be worked by an engine of four-horse power. Mr Appold has lately proposed to the engineer of the Dutch government to fix a similar wheel on the Haarlem Sea, now in process of being drained, by forty pumps driven by steam. A centrifugal pump of forty feet diameter would do more work than all the others put together, and would deliver—so the inventor asserts—1,500,000 gallons per minute. With such power at command, one would think we ought never more to hear of ships foundering at sea; and the emptying and reclamation of the Zuider Zee resolves itself into a possibility.

Though last, not least, is the newly-invented machine for making *aprototypes*, which, to quote from the description, are—'Printing types manufactured by self-acting machinery, of copper or other hard metal, without the aid of heat.' It is the work of a Frenchman, Monsieur Pettit, expatriated by the unsettled state of affairs in his own country. Such a machine scarcely admits of being gossiped about, so I must just give you a summary of the inventor's own words. The essential principle of type-manufacture, he states, has remained the same since the invention of printing, more than 400 years ago; and, as is well known, the comparative softness of the metal employed is a defect. This defect is now overcome. 'The extreme durability of copper,' we are told, 'when employed as a printing surface, is fully admitted by all printers. A London firm, employed to print stamps for the government, is in the habit of using raised copper surfaces for this purpose. No less than 125,000,000 impressions have been taken from one of these plates! If this result has been arrived at with copper in its ordinary state, it must be evident that the durability of the *aprototypes*, formed of copper, hardened by the compression to which it is subject in the process of manufacture, will be almost infinite.' The first cost of 100 lbs. weight of the copper type exceeds that of ordinary type by more than £20; but as it will last sixty times as long, there must be sixty renewals of the common type; so that ultimately there will be a saving in favour of copper of more than £800: besides which, the production of bad work by the soft metal types at sixty different times in the same interval will have been avoided. The copper not only remains uniform, but effects an economy of ink in its greater power of resisting pressure.

M. Pettit informs me that he made three machines before he succeeded in reaching the present stage of perfection. The one exhibited is about four feet long and two feet wide, constructed entirely of iron or other metal, and is of enormous weight. There is a winch turned by hand, and a fly-wheel; on revolving this, fourteen different motions are produced, which, all combined, form the types from square strips of copper inserted in the proper place: so that the workman has nothing to do but turn the wheel, and types drop into a tray at the rate of thirty-two a minute! Many printers and scientific men have expressed their approval of the new machine; among the latter Professor Faraday, who explained its mode of action to the company assembled at Lord Rose's soirée. The proposal is, to dispose of it in six shares of £6000 each; two of these, it is said, are sold, one of the purchasers being an eminent London typefounder. And now, if all anticipations be realised, we shall from this time date a new epoch in the art of typography.'

Although I have done with the soirées, I must claim a letter-writer's privilege to discuss everything; and

under this comprehensive head I may mention, what you will be pleased to learn, that the Geographical Society have awarded their medal to Mr Layard for his eminent researches in Nineveh—a recognition of merit honourable to both parties. As new claimants rise to honour, old ones pass away. Mr Vernon is dead; but his name will live for centuries to come, while eyes are left to view the noble gallery of paintings, worth £120,000, which he gave to the nation. He doubtless foresaw this reward, when he had the good sense to decline an offer of knighthood made to him by authority. Faraday, amid his grand magnetic researches, has been making science familiar to juvenile audiences at the Royal Institution, in a course of six lectures 'On the Chemical History of a Candle.' Who can protest about *infra. dig.* after this? But among other incidents, there is one bearing on 'the sanitary interest': the 'Lords' have been discussing the merits of a project for supplying Whitehaven with water from Ennerdale Lake. Those who have seen this magnificent sheet of water will recognise the excellence of the source, and we can but wish success to so promising a scheme. The distance is eighteen miles; and bearing in mind the Croton aqueduct of New York, which delivers 60,000,000 gallons every twenty-four hours, we presume the question of impracticability is not to be entertained for a moment.

To descend from great things to little: is it to the troubles in France that we are indebted for the *découvreur*, or shoe-black, who, with his stand and polishing apparatus, has been seen of late about the 'west end?' I should like to see the profession become general in London. The convenience would be great for dirty-booted pedestrians. Besides this enterprising individual, we have a *marchand de gallettes* established in Fleet Street. Thus you see it does not always require revocation of Edicts of Nantes to send us foreign talent.

You are perhaps beginning to query if I ever mean to stop; yet to close without a few words about literature would be to omit an important item of the everything. I promise, however, not to be prolix. The Parliamentary Committee is still pursuing the inquiry relative to the establishing of public libraries in populous towns and districts throughout the country. This is a sign of the times. It is easier to lead educated minds, than to coerce brutal instincts and unreason. And here, too, it is worth remembering, that with a People's College at Sheffield and Nottingham, we are likely to have a third in the metropolis of the eastern counties—Norwich, where the building of one is proposed by a gentleman of fortune. Thus may we hope to

¹ Make knowledge circle with the winds.'

But apropos of literature: Sir John Herschel has re-written his astronomical treatise, under the title of 'Outlines of Astronomy'; and from such a source you may be sure that the advantage is on the side of scientific readers. And Dr Forbes, whom you would take for a staid medicus, having scampered over Switzerland last autumn with all the vivacity of a truant schoolboy, has just published 'A Physician's Holiday,' by way, I suppose, of making others as cheery as himself. Be this as it may, he tells some things unknown before, and has produced a very readable book.

Accounts from the continent state that no one there now cares to read any publication larger than pamphlets; and of these there are legions, in which vexed questions of politics are discussed with every variety of talent and temper. Among these trifles I observe one—'Journal d'un Insurgé Malgré Lui'—'Journal of an Insurgent in Spite of Himself.' There ought to be something worth picking out in such a book. It appears that the writer was taken prisoner by accident (?), and shut up in the cellars of the Hôtel de Ville, until removed to the dungeons of Ivry. He suffered much, and observed more; and comes to this conclusion—'insurrection ought never to be permitted.' Of a different stamp is the uniform series of quartos containing

the works of their best philosophers, printed at the expense of the French government. Laplace's works in seven volumes have recently been presented to various institutions in this country by the minister of public instruction. The Academy, too, in conjunction with this functionary, offers a prize of 600 francs for 'Un Petit Traité'—or rather 'A short Treatise on Popular Hygiene, avoiding purely Scientific Details, for the Use of Workmen in Towns, and the Inhabitants of the Country.' The book is to be more especially adapted to the department of Seine-Inférieure, and is to convey general precepts in the most attractive style possible.

In France, the early history of the language has been much studied; and the Academy, with a view to the further promotion of the study, is about to republish the most ancient known French Grammar. Singular enough, this was written by an Englishman, Jehan Palsgrave, tutor to Princess Mary, in the reign of Henry VIII. There are but six copies in existence; and of these, five are in this country, and one in Paris, in the Mazarine Library. Being written in English, it is said the peculiarities of the old pronunciation will be better detected than if the work had been written in the vernacular of Gaul.

It has often been a reproach to our government that they neglect the collection of our national historical documents; and in the reign of George IV. an order was issued to remedy this defect. The results have now appeared in the first of a series of thick red-backed folios, entitled 'Monuments Historicae Britannicae,' or 'Materials for the History of Britain, from the Earliest Period to the End of the Reign of King Henry VII., published by Command of Her Majesty.' This initiatory volume contains the writings of Gildas, Bede, Aasser, Aethelweard, Henry of Huntingdon, Maistre Geoffrei Gaimar, with many others, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and engravings of coins. At the same rate, a volume in twenty years, we shall have to wait a long time for the remainder of the series.

But if legislatorial debates have a claim to interminability, gossip has none—so, *ad describendum*.

A MONTH AMONG THE PYRENEES.

As the regular routine of a Pau season, where either health or pleasure is concerned, includes a few weeks' residence at some of the many watering-places among the mountains, we proceeded to the Eaux Bonnes immediately on giving up our apartment in the pretty little town where we had so pleasantly passed the winter. My brother had hired a calèche for the summer, with three horses and a driver, on very reasonable terms. The driver was a very intelligent man, and proved extremely useful to us in the course of our wanderings.

Our drive from Pau through Gan to Louvie was both cold and rainy, although it was near the end of May at this time. The air became really piercing as we advanced deeper among the hills; but we forgot all discomfort as we proceeded, the scenery became so beautiful. The road lay up a valley enclosed by mountains, whose summits seemed to reach the clouds, and it followed the course of a rapid stream through a gorge sometimes no wider than the road and river, sometimes opening into meadows, sometimes extending into plains. There was no want of wood on the lower slopes of the hills or in the valley. Many a pretty-looking hamlet improved the cheerful aspect of our route; and here and there a smaller glen diverged on either hand, as if there were no end to the intricacies of this range of the Pyrenees. We stopped frequently to walk to different points of much attraction; and in this way so lengthened the journey, that it was late in the afternoon when we reached a large plain filled with villages, and through

which flowed several small rivers, the marble quarries and the huts of the labourers in them appearing high up among the forest-trees that covered the lower sweeps of the distant mountains. From this basin-like plain a road turned off over a handsome bridge, and up a very steep hill above a mile in length, ending in a ravine, along one side of which, on a narrow ledge a considerable height above the torrent, which we heard thundering below, runs a row of high white houses, built for the visitors to the Eaux Bonnes. We put up at the Hôtel de France; and ordering fires in the bedrooms allotted to us as our private chambers, we declined the public table for that first evening, and drank our tea in my room in English solitude. The singularity of our abode struck me the next morning with wonder. There we were in a very large hotel, one of a long row of high houses, for there are fifteen of these boarding-houses rising from a shelf apparently just wide enough to support them, a precipice below, a mountain behind, and a mountain opposite—the noise of rushing waters ever filling the ear, so many cascades dash down into the troubled stream which frets along among the rocks at the bottom of the ravine. The shelf looks narrower than it really is; for besides the houses which stand on the brink of the precipice, there is a road and a side-path between them and the sheltering mountain, and part of the way a narrow strip of shrubbery, and a little brook running along beside it carrying away the waste waters of the springs. These were within a few minutes' walk of our hotel. The street ends abruptly by turning off round a corner of the rock, and forming a crook of some hundred yards long, piercing into the hill as it were. This crook contains a few private houses, the rooms in which are let as required to those who prefer a more retired life than is led in the hotels, the pump-room, and the chapel. We determined on following exactly the prevailing habits of the place, and therefore decided on remaining where we were with a large agreeable party, many of whom were well acquainted with us, and in lodgings where cleanliness, space, comfort, and good cookery were all combined for by no means an extravagant charge; for we had made our bargain, and soldered it with the magic 'tout compris.'

We found our life a very pleasant one. We rose early; went to the springs; wandered about till the hour of our substantial breakfast; formed then the parties for excursions, which occupied the remainder of the morning; dined all together in the fine room, which would have held almost as many more; and spent the evening in the still finer saloon, where work, reading, cards, music, and dancing went on without effort, and where a lively conversation, full of wit, full of good-nature, and full of information, accompanying manners studiously polite and often high-bred, made these sociable réunions really enjoyable. The company from the other houses frequently joined us, and we returned the compliment, when, although we had only amateur music, the younger members of our society managed to play the double parts of band and dancers, till the elders began to wish for their pillows, as no late hours overnight ever prevented the early walk to the pump-room. Whether it were the waters in which my invalid son bathed daily, and drank of plentifully, or the fine air, or the gay spirits round us, or altogether, I know not, but never did any one so rapidly gain strength as did my boy up in this beautiful wilderness. We were almost always out, on foot or pony back, wandering in all directions among the mountains—sometimes along roads leading to well-known places, sometimes sauntering in the well-kept walks nearer at hand, sometimes led on by a mere

bridle-path to some hidden hamlet, stumbling upon some fantastic rock or some enchanting waterfall, or some deep narrow glen running up into the gloomy forest, from whence issued the smoke of the charcoal burner and the sound of the woodman's axe. The picturesque appearance of the small villages, or the still more interesting lonely cabin, either perched on some height, or half-concealed by the woods of the valley, at a distance, added considerably to the peculiar beauty of the ever-varying scenery. Close at hand, they are rather squalid-looking dwellings, small, low, and rudely finished, and very untidy about the doors, exhibiting no luxury, but containing the few humble comforts required by so hardy a people. There appeared to be a sufficiency of food and fuel among them; good bedding was invariable, and good stout clothing. The capuchin, or hood, which is generally worn here by all during rainy weather, is a singular addition to the head-gear: it is nothing but a bag open on one side, pulled on over the cap or handkerchief quite low down upon the shoulders, the corner left sticking up as a top; but being generally of a bright colour on the women—scarlet trimmed with black, or grey trimmed with scarlet—the effect is gay as well as odd. The men seldom afforded themselves any stuff better-looking than sack—*the same dingy hue at least*—without any ornamental edging, though the material was woollen. When not required as a *parapluie*, the capuchin is folded flat, and stuffed into the belt of the blouse, or apron, unless it can be used as a cushion beneath the weighty burdens always borne on the head in these mountains, and by the women mostly, who seemed indeed to do all the drudgery, the men employing themselves as herds or shepherds, in the quarries, or in the forest, where their habits of labour were beyond my observation. I can only answer for the industry of the hard-worked women, none of whom ever seemed to lose a moment: when not in the fields, their knitting was ever in their hands—they would trot merrily along, a fagot on their back, or a pail or a basket on their head, knitting all the while faster than my eye could follow the needles. The dress of both sexes was well suited to the rough weather of the mountains, but it was extremely ugly: dark gowns, dark aprons, and dark handkerchiefs on the women; dark caps, dark blouses, and dark trousers on the men; and no linen to be seen on either.

My love of wild flowers carried me often on foot distances I should hardly have ventured on had I set out with the intention of reaching them. Often, too, this taste set me scrambling up and down to positions a little awkward for an elderly gentlewoman, who, the excitement of advance over, found the retreat in cold blood sometimes difficult. These adventures, however, formed a very amusing foundation for our evening gossip, and also led to a more intimate acquaintance with a young person in whom I became extremely interested—a young English lady, of great skill as a botanical artist. She arranged all my beautiful bouquets scientifically in her dried collection, copying them first by painting them on card-paper, as I have seldom seen nature rivalled. The colours she employed she procured in Pau, in little round flat cakes, mixed up, not with gum, but honey. Their brilliancy and softness are much beyond anything we are at home accustomed to. I should think the result of our united labours must form a rare collection: many of the larger flowers were superb, and I hardly think my researches omitted one of any size or species, so that the Flora of this part of the Pyrenees was perfectly represented. The best part of the employment was the improvement in the health of this very delicate young person during its progress. She and her donkey soon penetrated into many of my recesses of treasure; and though the rocks and water-courses remained beyond her reach during our stay at the Eaux Bonnes, she had explored them all before we met again at Cauteretz.

One of our favourite long walks was to the Eaux Chaudes [Hot Springs], to which there was a short

footpath across the hills, rude in many places, and not altogether free from danger in descending to, or crossing, the torrents. The ordinary approach to these hot springs by the carriage-road made a considerable round; for when we drove there, we had to return to the wide plain full of villages, and after recrossing the bridge to meet the Pau road, we followed it on straight up the steepest hill anybody almost could ever have had to ascend in a carriage. Near the top, the rock has been tunnelled through to admit of a passage the over-hanging summit rendering any other mode of reaching the opposite side of the mountain impracticable. In this narrow, gloomy vault, where an icy blast always meets the traveller, stands a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, who is supposed to protect all wayfarers during the dangers of this journey, paying her for the same a few sous merely, the descent on the other side being fully as steep, though not quite so long, as the ascent. It is a zig-zag road, cut out of the rock, by the side of which a torrent dashes turbulently down in the chasm it has worn on the face of the precipice. The scene is so wild, and made me so nervous the first time I travelled it, that I felt quite relieved on reaching the bottom, and turning round the wall of rock which had screened us from all other prospect, to find myself in another valley, where, nestled down in a quiet meadow, was a small hamlet, attached to what appeared to be a fine baronial castle.

This imposing edifice is placed on a rocky promontory, which rises from the bank of the river, and shows remarkably well amidst the steep surrounding mountains. It is the new bath-house, which has been for many years in the course of erection, and is to contain baths, pump-room, library, and shops below, and numerous apartments for the invalids above. But French workmen are proverbially slow—so slow, there is no saying when this spacious building will be ready for occupation—and in the meanwhile the few sick persons who now visit these waters must lodge in very indifferent quarters, and put up with the dreary but essentially comfortable accommodation of the old bath-house. This we entered from the road by an upper floor, and then descended a staircase to a long corridor connecting the two wings of the hotel, where we found established a cook-shop, a confectioner, a grocer, a wine-shop, all in a row, diligently served by tradesmen visitors, who come during the season to supply invalid visitors with these necessities. It is not much the fashion to resort to the waters here: they have gone out of repute since Cauteréts and Barèges became so celebrated: probably their fame may revive with their improved accommodation, for the scenery around, and on far into Spain, is wonderfully fine, and they are just in the way of the most interesting of the many excursions to the various mountain-tops to which tourists in general have such pleasure in ascending. My brother was foremost in all these enterprises. He never seemed to me to be satisfied while there was any height above him he had not reached. Every pic on the Pyrenees he had, I believe, the satisfaction of remembering he had set his foot on, though I never could make out that he saw anything from them surpassing the beauty which quite contented me in the valleys. We once or twice drove as far as Gabas, where stands a small Spanish customhouse on the frontier. The scenery on this excursion was superb. Mountain rose above mountain, rock towered over rock, assuming every sort of fantastic shape; often taking the resemblance of battlemented keeps, or the long flank walls of a time-stained fortress. And then we entered the forest, where the black pine, oak, and other hard-wood trees, mingled with the lighter birch near the stream, combined to form a gloom that was delightful: through which, and a thick underwood of box, we peeped to catch at intervals small patches of verdure, brilliant with flowers. We crossed the river several times by means of good wooden bridges, and at these opportunities observed that sheep covered the lower hills;

cattle, with a few mares and foals among them, grazed upon the strips of meadow; and sometimes a goat appeared gazing from some pinnacle. We saw no habitations after leaving the Eaux Chaudes a couple of miles behind; and it was not till I mentioned, in surprise, the absence of all visible owners of these flocks and herds, that I heard of the curious village, hidden from view high up among the fastnesses of nature's contrivings, where dwell the singular people who boast so wide a pasture. On through this wild ravine still stretched the well-engineered road, the increasing gloom of the forest adding to the interest with which we traversed its solitary length. Eagles soared above: cascades innumerable dashed down on every side. We were shown the paths by which, during the winter season, the hunters tracked the bear, and the rocks where the wild-cat and the wolf were sheltered. A lively trade in furs is carried on through the medium of the active mountaineers, who bring many varieties of this rich merchandise into the market, the martin-sable of the Pyrenees, in particular, being much sought after.

In summer, no such exciting employment is going on. The only evidences of man we met with were the newly-felled pines, which lay in large piles among the underwood, waiting to be barked by the woodmen, who carry on their trade in a rude style, marking the little progress in the arts yet made in these remote regions. An axe, and a small double hand-saw, by the aid of which two indolent workmen cut up a log into planks, was all the machinery they seemed to be acquainted with. The branches lopped off the trees were made into charcoal on the spot by a set of most hideous old women in dark dresses, who also gathered the bark. The general run of the timber was used for building and for firing in the district, but any very large tree is sent off to Bordeaux or Bayonne for the shipping.

Another of our long excursions was to Oleron, from whence we went to visit the Vallée d'Aspe. This indeed involved an absence of a few days, as the distance was considerable. We had to drive down the steep hill, and back to the plain with the villages, and then retrace our route along the valley to Louvie. We then left the Pau road, and struck off to the west, skirting the roots of the mountains, across a very fertile plain to Oleron, a large town, not remarkable for much but its situation upon two wide rivers, and the surrounding well-wooded and well-cultivated fields. Part of the country we were now travelling through was very park-like, very English, in many places very pretty, full of small châteaux and villages, which looked well at a distance, though they were disappointing to enter! On arriving at the lower part of the Vallée d'Aspe, we found that it resembled North Wales—a rich and peaceful scene, quite pastoral in its character—a rest to the imagination after the sublimer scenery of the Eaux Chaudes and the Eaux Bonnes. The low hills, of various forms, are cultivated nearly to the top; the fields are of many strange shapes, divided by woodings, and dotted all over with little clumps of trees, half concealing the cottages: a wide river flowed quietly through the meadows—all was repose for the first few miles of our journey. Bédous, where we stopped to feed the horses, is a sort of town in a large plain, perfectly uninteresting; and the inn so little agreeable, that as soon as we had shown our passports to the gendarmes (for Bédous is another frontier station—Spain was very near us), we took our sandwiches in our hands, and walked to a waterfall at a little distance, considered to be among the finest in the district. We also crossed the river, and went along a rude mountain-road to the village of Osse; a collection of mean cottages set down on a bare hill-side—stones being the principal feature in its scenery. We had stones all round us; we walked over stones and by stones; and there were stone-walls for hedges, and no trees anywhere. About three hundred Huguenots are collected here in thirty or forty houses, who, thus isolated from their brethren of the Reformed faith, have maintained the integrity of their

creed from the time of the Albigenses. Their perpetual intermarriages have resulted in lowering their capacities, mental and bodily, to a very unfortunate degree. Slow, lazy, stunted in every way, many of them deformed, they have vegetated in the miserable discomfort consequent on their increasing inertness till this present time, when a possibility of improvement has presented itself in the form of an intelligent young man, sent from the Evangelical Normal School at Paris, where he was educated, to take charge of the rising generation. He is paid by the society; supplied by it with books and other school requisites; and he teaches much after our own improved methods—by the help of monitors, tablets on the walls, the black-board, and pictures, which last he told me had had the effect of wakening up the minds of very dull pupils. One cannot but painfully regret the degree of ignorance which has tended to degrade this unfortunate community. At the time of our visit, the pastor was a superannuated old man, more occupied with the means of supporting his family than zealous in his clerical duties. His house was the best in the village, yet was but a poor one. His kitchen, in which he seemed to live, was no better finished than any small farmer's in the district; it was, however, well filled with simple stores, implements of husbandry, bright pots and pans, and all the evidences of woman's thrift. His daughter or granddaughter was at her wheel within the large chimney, dressed like the peasants of a humble class, as was the old minister, who must 'rest in peace' ere the schoolmaster's labours can be fully rewarded. A young and better-instructed priest would much assist in the regeneration of this desolate place: but he would need to be an enthusiast in his holy calling; none else could endure so cheerless a situation among a degraded people, despised by their neighbours, and with no means of living on a sterile mountain amid rocks, and stones, and misery, but the poor pittance paid by the French government to the dissenting clergy.

Close to Bédouin there is a column in the centre of a field raised to the memory of a Bernais poet, much admired by all classes of his countrymen: his verses are in all mouths, but being in the patois tongue, we could not comprehend their peculiar beauty. There is a Roman inscription on a rock near the first bridge we crossed on entering the valley, announcing the advance so far of a cohort more than a thousand years ago. Traces of the Romans abound in these parts, their love of mineral waters having led them to most of the health-restoring springs of these mountains. We stopped at Sarrance, a very pretty village, to see its very pretty church, much resorted to all through the summer by sick pilgrims, who come to beg the prayers of 'Our Lady,' represented here by a small stone image, which tradition reports to have fallen from heaven in a miraculous manner. Another tradition has it, that the Romans dropped this image in the river as they crossed, and that the legion long lamented its 'Minerva.' The fine bracing air of this sunny spot may have something to do with the cures certainly effected under the shadow of the shrine of our 'Lady of Sarrance,' who, like many other excellent objects, must have that within which passes show, for she can boast of little outward beauty. She is rudely hewn in black marble, her features much defaced, and her stature of the smallest, being but a foot and a-half in height. She is very finely dressed, and is enclosed in a box, with one side of it glass, which turns upon a pivot, so that she can either look out from the top of her altar upon the faithful kneeling below, or turn to a select few in her private chamber, whither we ascended by half-a-dozen steep steps to have a nearer view of her. The attendant priest quitted the confessional hurriedly upon our entrance, pushing aside with little ceremony his humble penitents, to do the honours of the shrine to a party of strangers. As we drove on towards Oleron, and again on driving from it, the scenery around reminded me of Kent—fine old wood, heights and hollows, hedges, corn-fields, and a great

many country-houses, and no water after leaving the two rivers at Oleron behind. It was all rich and lovely, but tame when compared with the wildness of the mountains towards which we returned, with the sort of joy that one feels on meeting old friends again; so surely do the more marked features of a rugged landscape impress the heart of a true lover of nature. The walks about the Eaux Bonnes were more attractive to us than ever; and in particular I took pleasure in wandering low down by the rocky banks of the stream, whose thunders we heard so plainly from our aerial dwelling, though we seldom saw much of it till we sought for its foaming waters among the trees which shrouded its course. This noisy torrent leaps, rather than flows, from one rock to another, forming a succession of rapids each more attractive than the last, till in some half dozen places it meets with an obstruction of sufficient size to send it foaming down in what would be quite a cascade elsewhere.

The air, the pure water, the cleanliness, and the cheerfulness of this singular place, made us leave it with regret; but the proper time had been spent at these fountains, and we were ordered to Cauteréz. There is a bridle-road across the mountains between the two places, which we at one time thought of taking, sending the calèche with the luggage round by the public road; but on further consideration, we abandoned this excursion, on account of a fancy I or my son had taken to return to Pau. The company of actors appointed to this district had arrived there, and I had got it into my head that I should like to see them. I had not been at a play for years—at a French play never—and as the Toulouse theatre had a fair reputation, I wished to take advantage of this visit from part of the troop, to form my own judgment of French comedy. We took rather a large party with us, many of our Eaux Bonnes friends agreeing to accompany us. On our arrival at Pau, we found it necessary to take a whole box for the somewhat numerous party. The theatre is small: it was well, though not brilliantly lighted, and there was little scenery, and only three or four actors, yet I never was more diverted. They gave two vaudevilles of one act each; five actors appeared in one, only four in the other. They were perfectly well dressed; there were no clap-traps, no hints to the galleries, no allusions to the politics of the day, and very little story; but that little was so well told, the actors were so completely the people they represented, they were so fully occupied with their parts, apparently so unconscious of an audience, the dialogue was so spirited, so well given, that we were carried away in earnest by the illusion. One young actress would have been quite a 'star' in England from her comic powers: she had a fine clear soprano voice too. Besides these little comedies, a young Spaniard played very brilliantly on the piano-forte between the pieces; music that was very agreeable to listen to, from the beauty of the several airs he introduced into his composition, and the style and the touch he was master of. There was also some very good dancing by three members of the *corps de ballet* at Madrid, who were making a little money on their return to Spain from Paris, where they had just concluded an engagement. They were handsome young people, very graceful, and very agile, and particularly happy in their costumes, which were varied to suit their dances. When they danced the 'fandango,' the girl wore a dress of white satin, flounced and trimmed with broad black lace, the effect of which was really elegant, though in description reminding us a little of the magpie. I daresay these active Spaniards were capable of performing all those astonishing whirls, and twirls, and flights, and contortions, so much in fashion at our own Opera; but they had the better taste to confine themselves to national dances of a lively character, during the evolutions of which they merely attitudined a little more than unprofessional exhibitors would have considered seemly. Altogether, we passed a most agreeable evening; and

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we all agreed, that if the Toulouse company rank only third amongst the provincial actors, numbers two and one must be well worth taking a longer journey than our twenty miles to see.

CURIOSITIES OF METEOROLOGY.

METEOROLOGY, or the science of the phenomena of the atmosphere, can scarcely be said to have been known at all before the latter part of the last century, since it was not till then that the atmosphere wholly ceased, in the imaginations even of the learned, to be a simple body, and was divided into its constituent fluids. The proportions in which are intermixed the two gases oxygen and nitrogen, forming the air we breathe, are the first curiosity we meet on entering the subject, and fill us with surprise and admiration. Two volumes of the former fluid, and half a volume of the latter, compose the atmosphere, fitted for the respiration both of the animal and vegetable world: but if differently combined, even in a slight degree, what would be the result? If instead of half a volume of oxygen there were a whole volume, all mankind would die in convulsions of intoxication, for the production would be nitrous oxide or *laughing gas*. If the volumes were equal, then we should have the poisonous acid called nitric oxide; and if two of nitrogen and five of oxygen, instead of the wholesome fluid surrounding our globe, there would be a sea of aquafortis! In short, the *only* combination of the two gases fitted for the support of animal and vegetable life is precisely the one that exists.

In a former paper, we mentioned the curious effect of elevation upon the temperature of boiling water; and in a work which will supply us with abundant materials for the present article—and which we wish strongly to recommend to our readers*—there is an anecdote on the subject taken from a traveller on the Andes. ‘Our potatoes,’ says Mr Darwin, ‘after remaining for some hours in the boiling water, were nearly as hard as ever. The pot was left on the fire all night, and next morning it was boiled again; but yet the potatoes were not cooked. I found out this by overhearing my two companions discussing the cause; they had come to the simple conclusion that the potatoes were bewitched, or that the pot, which was a new one, did not choose to boil them.’ This phenomenon depends upon the weight or density of the atmosphere, which becomes less as we ascend. The weight of the whole mass of air surrounding the globe is computed to be equivalent to that of a globe of lead sixty miles in diameter; or, according to other writers, if expressed in tons, it would give 5114 billions.

The temperature of the currents of air that sweep across the ocean, and diminish the region of cold on the land, is another curious subject. The explanation usually given is, that these winds chill the particles of water on the surface of the deep, which immediately descend, and have their places supplied by others, warmer, and of less specific gravity; and that this goes on till the temperature of the wind itself is increased.

Of the various phenomena of the atmosphere, that of twilight is one of the most beautiful. ‘Although it is the western horizon,’ says Dr Thomson, ‘which glows most lovingly, still, immediately opposite the setting sun, especially under certain atmospheric conditions, the eastern sky partakes of the roseate hues. The intensity of this tinge is greatest at the moment when his disk sinks below the horizon. It is the last effort of the sun to dart his rays upon the sky before leaving us for the night, which reach us by reflection, deprived of all their colours but the red. Below this a deep-blue or dusky-looking segment appears, and when circumstances are favourable, it is well defined. This is the anti-twilight of Mairan: it is the shadow of our globe cast upon the sky.’ Our author notices the singular brightness witnessed

at midnight in some European countries in 1831. This second twilight (if such it was) was so light, that small print could be read; and during the months it appeared—August and September—the barometer fell, storms swept the earth, and the sun was of a silvery whiteness. At the north pole, from the autumnal to the vernal equinox, there is a period of continual twilight, then of continual night, and then of twilight again, till the sun asserts his place in the sky, and reigns supreme. Continual daylight! What a splendid idea! Captain Beechey and his comrades were at first reluctant to quit the deck; and when they did so, it was so wonderful—when they came again to keep their *night-watch*—to find the sun still gilding the firmament! But this soon became irksome; and the mariners, taking a lesson from the instinct of the birds around them, went to their roost at a regular hour.

Clouds are not essential, as they are commonly supposed to be, to the phenomenon of rain. Sometimes the rain may be wafted on the wind from a distance; but it likewise may arise from the condensation of moisture, ‘without its passing into the intermediate state of clouds. In the higher regions this vapour may become frozen, even without the semblance of a cloud, and descending to a warmer stratum, be again dissolved, dissipated, or precipitated.’ Sir J. C. Ross tells us that in the South Atlantic it rained for above an hour when the sky was free from clouds. In the Mauritius this is not a rare phenomenon; but in Europe, the greatest time of its duration was ten minutes at Constantinople. In old writers we are frequently told of the sky ‘raining blood;’ and in fact a red rain, as well as a red snow, is perfectly well authenticated. There occurred a fall near Bristol consisting of the seeds of ivy-berries. Pollen showers, vulgarly called yellow or sulphur rains, are common: some are the pollen of the Scotch fir: and one extraordinary fall of this kind of rain, which took place during the night, was phosphorescent, and greatly alarmed the beholders. ‘On the afternoon of the 11th of June 1847, the wooded part of Morayshire appeared to smoke, and for a time fears were entertained that the fir plantations were on fire. A smart breeze suddenly got up from the north, and above the woods there appeared to rise about fifty columns of something resembling smoke, which wreathed about like water-sprouts. The atmosphere now calmed, and the mystery was solved; for what seemed smoke, was in reality the pollen of the woods.’ Showers of ‘manna’ are frequent, and consist of an esculent lichen, which in time of famine has often done good service. In 1670, the lakes and ditches at the Hague looked like blood; an appearance which was discovered by the microscope to be owing to myriads of small red animals. In 1815, a lake in the south of France suddenly became a patch-work of red, violet, and grass-green, and was referred to similar natural causes by the experiments of Klaproth. In short, the preternatural rains of the olden time are ascertained by science to have received their colour from plants, animalcules, or mineral substances.

The phenomenon of a celebrated black rain has not been explained. ‘Upon the 23d November 1819 a very remarkable black rain fell at Montreal, accompanied by appalling thunder. It was preceded by dark and gloomy weather, experienced over the United States: at times the aspect of the sky was grand and terrific. “In Montreal the darkness was very great, particularly on a Sunday morning; the whole atmosphere appeared as if covered with a thick haze of a dingy orange colour, during which rain fell of a thick and dark inky appearance, and apparently impregnated with some black substance resembling soot. At this period many conjectures were afloat, among which, that a volcano had broken out in some distant quarter. The weather after this became pleasant, until the Tuesday following, when, at twelve o’clock, a heavy damp vapour enveloped the whole city, when it became necessary to light candles in all the houses; the stalls of the butchers were also lighted. The appearance was awful, and grand in the

* Introduction to Meteorology. By David Pardie Thomson, M.D., Grad. Univ. Edin., Licent. Roy. Coll. of Surgeons, Edin. Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London. 1849.

extreme. A little before three o'clock a slight shock of an earthquake was felt, accompanied with a noise resembling the distant discharge of artillery. It was now that the increasing gloom engrossed universal attention. At twenty minutes past three, when the darkness seemed to have reached its greatest depth, the whole city was instantaneously illuminated by the most vivid flash of lightning ever witnessed in Montreal, immediately followed by a peal of thunder, so loud and near, as to shake the strongest buildings to their foundation, which was followed by other peals, and accompanied by a heavy shower of rain of the colour above described. After 4 p.m. the heavens began to assume a brighter appearance, and fear gradually subsided."

Showers of sand and earth have been numerous; but showers of flesh, fish, frogs, &c. are worth noticing. The flesh 'was recognised as a distinct substance by Scheuchzer about the beginning of last century, and in 1747 its true animal nature was shown by Lemonnier. Since then, its properties have been investigated by Vanquelin and others. It bears a greater resemblance to mucus than to gelatine or tannin; but it does not exactly agree with any one of these: it is unctuous, grayish-white, and when cold, inodorous and tasteless: it is soluble in hot water, and then resembles thin beef-tea.' This substance has skin attached, and resembles human flesh! In South America, in 1698, an area of country forty-three miles square was strewed with fish; and in England, at a considerable distance from the sea, a pasture-field was found scattered over with about a bushel of small fish. A shower of herrings fell in 1825 in Kinross-shire; but instances of the same kind are numerous both in this country and elsewhere. At Ham, in France, M. Peltier, after a heavy rain had fallen, saw the square before him covered with toads. 'Astonished at this, I stretched out my hand, which was struck by many of these animals as they fell. The yard of the house was also full of them. I saw them fall on the roof of a house, and rebound from thence on the pavement. They all went off by the channels which the rain formed, and were carried out of the town.'

Blood spots have produced greater terror than even red rain. 'A widow chancing to be alone before her house in the village of Castelenschloss, suddenly beheld a frightful spectacle—blood springing from the earth all around her! She rushed in alarm into the cottage; but, oh horrible! blood is flowing everywhere—from the wainscot and from the stones—it falls in a stream from a basin on a shelf—and even the child's cradle overflows with it. The woman imagines that the invisible hand of an assassin has been at work, and rushes in distraction out of doors, crying murder! murder! The villagers and the monks of a neighbouring convent assemble at the noise; they succeed in partly effacing the bloody stains: but a little later in the day, the other inhabitants of the house, sitting down in terror to eat their evening meal under the projecting eaves, suddenly discover blood bubbling up in a pond—blood flowing from the loft—blood covering all the walls of the house. Blood—blood—everywhere blood!' These spots were merely mould; the remarkable, almost instantaneous growth of fungi in a humid atmosphere.

In Scripture we read of hailstones being miraculously showered down upon the Canaanites, and of the 'thunderings and hail' which struck the Egyptians with terror. In other countries there have been natural showers of the same kind. In England, in 1202, hailstones fell as large as eggs; at the end of the seventeenth century some were found measuring from eight to fourteen inches in circumference; and in Scotland, in 1629, 'there rose "great winds, with storms of such unmeasurable hailstones, that manie townes were thrown down" by their violence, and fires spread throughout the kingdom, "burning up steeples with such force of fire, that the belles were in diverse places melted." In the Orkney Islands, in 1818, hailstones were gathered as large as a goose egg; and in 1822, men and animals

were killed by them on the banks of the Rhine. 'The most extraordinary hailstone on record is said by Heyne to have descended near Seringapatam towards the close of Tippoo Sultan's reign: it was as large as an elephant!'

The icebergs are immense glaciers which have tumbled from the mountains into the ocean. 'Frost,' says Pennant, 'sports with these icebergs, and gives them majestic as well as singular forms. Masses have been seen assuming the shape of a Gothic church, with arched windows and doors, and all the rich drapery of that style, composed of what an Arabian tale would scarcely dare to relate, of crystals of the richest sapphirine blue; tables with one or more feet; and often flat-roofed temples, like those of Luxor on the Nile, supported by transparent columns of cerulean hue, float by the spectator.' Icebergs have been seen in the form of church spires 300 feet high. Some have an area of six squares miles, and are 600 feet high.

We now come to a different, and perhaps a more interesting class of phenomena. The glory surrounding the shadow of the observer in certain conditions of the atmosphere has frequently attracted attention. 'During the intense frost of January 1820, this beautiful meteor was seen at Perth, upon the fog which arose from evaporation from the ice upon the Tay. Looking from the bridge, the spectator beheld his shadow on the vapour, of gigantic size, surrounded by a halo, and throwing off prismatic radiations.' An analogous appearance was sometimes witnessed by Mr Green, the aéronaut, when about two miles above the earth. It was the shadow of his balloon thrown upon the upper surface of a cloud, and always surrounded by a triple iris. The parhelion, or mock-sun, is a more magnificent meteor, but it has been frequently described. The mirage is usually caused by 'the irregular refraction of light passing through strata of air of unequal density.' Dr Vince, when at Ramsgate, saw the *whole* of Dover Castle, as if upon the Ramsgate side of a hill which obscures the castle, excepting the turrets, from that town. Between Ramsgate and the land from which the hill rises, almost six miles of sea intervene, and about the same distance thence to the castle, which stands upon a cliff about 320 feet above the sea. During the continuance of this beautiful mirage, the castle was so vividly depicted, that the hill did not itself appear through the image. On the beach at Hastings, the coast of France, from Calais to Dieppe, became distinctly visible; and the fishing-boats were seen with a glass lying at anchor. When human figures in motion, such as soldiers, are seen in this spectral manner, the picture becomes very exciting, and may account for some appearances described in history—such as the phantom-fight of Artaveld—and set down as preternatural. A phenomenon of this kind was seen on the Mendip Hills. 'It represented a large body of troops moving onwards with drawn swords; their position and space were often changed; and so distinctly were they visible, that the very trappings of the horses, and the several accoutrements of the soldiers, could be distinguished: the phenomenon lasted above an hour. It was afterwards ascertained that a body of yeomanry were practising about fifteen miles off.' The following is still more interesting, and is susceptible of a similar explanation. 'On a summer evening in the year 1743, when Daniel Stricket, a servant to John Wren of Wilton Hall, was sitting at the door along with his master, they saw the figure of a man with a dog pursuing some horses along Souterfell side, a place so extremely steep, that a horse could scarcely travel upon it at all. The figures appeared to run at an amazing pace, till they got out of sight at the lower end of the fell. On the following morning, Stricket and his master ascended the steep side of the mountain, in full expectation of finding the man dead, and of picking up some of the horses' shoes, which they thought must have been cast, while galloping at such a furious rate. Their expectations, however, were disappointed.' In the following

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year, the same Daniel Stricket was walking about seven o'clock in the evening, a little above the house, when he saw a troop of horsemen riding on Souterfell side, in pretty close ranks, and at a brisk pace. . . . The equestrian figures seemed to come from the lowest parts of Souterfell, and became visible at a place called Knott. They then advanced in regular troops along the side of the fell till they came opposite to Blakehills, when they went over the mountain, after describing a kind of curvilinear path. The pace at which the figures moved was a regular swift walk, and they continued to be seen for upwards of two hours; the approach of darkness alone preventing them from being visible. Many troops were seen in succession; and frequently the last but one in a troop quitted his position, galloped to the front, and took up the same pace with the rest.

The Fata Morgana, as seen from the Straits of Messina, is thus described by an Italian writer:—⁴ On the 15th August 1643, as I stood at my window, I was surprised with a most wonderful and delectable spectacle. The sea that washes the Sicilian shore swelled up, and became, for ten miles in length, like a chain of dark mountains; whilst the waters on the Calabrian shore grew quite smooth, and in an instant appeared as one clear polished mirror, reclining against the ridge. On this was depicted in chiaro-scuro, a string of several thousand pilasters, all equal in altitude, distance, and degree of light and shade. In a moment they lost half their height, and bent into grades like Roman aqueducts. A long cornice was next formed upon the top, and above it rose innumerable castles, all perfectly alike. These soon split into towers, which were shortly afterwards lost in colonnades, then ended in pines, cypresses, and other trees, even and similar. This is the *fata morgana*, which, for twenty-six years, I thought a mere fable. The Enchanted Coast of the polar regions is another beautiful effect of refraction, and presents, according to Scoresby, the appearance of an ancient city with its ruined towers and monuments.

The Spectre of the Brocken is the shadow of the spectator himself cast upon clouds and mists. This is seen of gigantic size from the summit of the Hartz Mountains; but the following adventure of a traveller on our own Skiddaw is equally interesting:—One of the party was a short distance in advance, when a ray of sunshine darted through the mist, and he saw a figure walking ten or fifteen yards distant from his side. Taking it for granted that this was one of his companions, whom he had supposed at some distance, he vented some expressions of disappointment; and receiving no answer, repeated, and repeated it again. Still there was no answer, though the figure kept steadily advancing with even steps. At last he stopped, half angry, and turned quite round to look at his silent companion, who did the same, but receded as he approached; and it became evident that the figure, apparently dimly seen through the mist, was his own shadow reflected on it. It was then surrounded by a bright halo, and as the light became stronger, grew less and less distinct. The rest of the party came up in time to witness this remarkable appearance, with some modification. On reaching the ridge of the mountain, our figures, of supra-human size, appeared to be projected on the mist in the direction of the Solway.⁵

St Elmo's Fire is a luminous meteor which appears resting upon the tops of the masts of a ship at sea, or sometimes upon the points of spears on land. Lord Napier describes it as 'a blaze of pale phosphorescent light flitting and creeping round the surface of the mast,' and this, in an intensely dark night, and accompanied by thunder and lightning, must have formed a very impressive spectacle. The fireball, though probably electrical, has never been properly accounted for. The most remarkable one on record occurred on the 18th August 1783, about 9 P.M., and was visible over a wide extent of Europe, from the north of Ireland to Rome, frequently changing its form and hue. It crossed the zenith at Edinburgh, and then appeared round

and well-defined, of a greenish colour, casting a shade upon the ground of a similar tint: a tail of considerable length attended it. Its aspect was much changed when seen at Greenwich, for it then looked like two bright balls, the diameter of which was about two feet, followed by others connected together by a luminous body, and finally terminating in a blaze tapering to a point: the colours of the balls were different. This was a phenomenon awfully grand! The height of the ball was estimated to be far above that usually assigned to our atmosphere; its speed was not less than 1000 miles a minute, and its diameter was computed at 2800 yards. The fireball sometimes heralds the appearance of falling stars, a phenomenon equally mysterious: on one occasion at least a thousand of the latter fell before dawn.

The Ignis Fatuus is supposed by some to be of electrical origin, while others suppose it to be phosphuretted hydrogen evolved in the process of decomposition. 'The suggestion of this gas,' says Dr Thomson, 'as an explanation of the meteor, recalls the chimera of sepulchral lamps perpetually burning. The sober matter-of-fact man may join the sceptic in rejecting the fable, though told by Licetus, of the unextinguishable lamp in the tomb of Pallas, the hero of the Mantuan bard, discovered about the year 800, after being shut up nearly 2000 years. Are we to accept the account of the burning lamp of Olybius, encased in its double urn; or that of Tulliola, which was said to be found burning, when, in the time of Pope Paul III, fifteen centuries after Cicero had bewailed the loss of his daughter—her sepulchre was accidentally opened? But what shall be said of Camden in the seventeenth century, or of the alleged discovery in Spain in the present era? This antiquarian and historian tells us that the vault in York, where the remains of Constantius Chlorus reposed, was violated when the monasteries were ransacked, and the sepulchral lamp was found burning, but it immediately expired! So at Baena in Spain, near the Castellum Priscum, between Granada and Cordova, so late as August 1833, another ignited sepulchral lamp was discovered. Like the former, the flame instantly expired, and the vessel was broken from its fastenings on attempting its removal.'

We must now conclude, but for no other reason than that we have come to the end of our space. Dr Thomson's book is full of sound and entertaining instruction. Evincing extensive reading and judicious arrangement, it will be found an admirable 'Introduction' to the science of which it treats—a science consisting as yet more of detailed observations than of established principles, of description rather than of explanation. Less technical than the treatises of Daniel and Kämptz, our author's work will be especially useful to general readers, carrying them pleasantly over what is known, and referring with scrupulous fidelity to the sources from whence he has drawn his materials, or in which attempts have been made to explain the phenomena described.

CAPTAIN POSITIVE.

A FRENCH veteran with one arm was seated before the door of his neat cottage one pleasant evening in July. He was surrounded by several village lads, who with one voice intreated him to commence his promised story. The old man took his pipe from his mouth, wiped his lips with the back of his remaining hand, and began thus:—

'In my time, boys, Frenchmen would have scorned to fight with Frenchmen in the streets as they do now. No, no; when we fought, it was for the honour of France, and against her foreign enemies. Well, my story begins on the 6th of November 1812, a short time after the battle of Wiazma. We were beating a retreat, not before the Russians, for they kept at a respectful distance from our cantonments, but before the biting cold of their detestable country, more terrible to us than Russians, Austrians, and Bavarians put together. For the last few days our officers had been telling us that we were approaching Smolensko, where we should be certain of finding food,

fire, brandy, and shoes; but in the meantime we were perishing in the ice, and perpetually harassed by bands of Cossack riders.

"We had marched for six hours, without pausing to draw breath, for we knew that repose was certain death. A bitter wind hurled snow-flakes against our faces, and now and then we stumbled over the frozen corpses of our comrades. No singing or talking then! Even the grumblers ceased to complain, and that was a bad sign. I walked behind my captain: he was a short man, strongly built, rugged and severe, but brave and true as his own sword-blade. We called him Captain Positive; for, once he said a thing, so it was—no appeal—he never changed his mind. He had been wounded at Wiazena, and his usually red face was now quite pale; while the pieces of an old white handkerchief which he had wrapped round his legs were soaked with blood. I saw him first move slowly, then stagger like a drunken man, and at last he fell down like a block.

"*Morbleu!* captain," said I, bending over him, "you can't live there."

"You see that I can, because I do," replied he, pointing to his limbs.

"Captain," said I, "you mustn't die thus;" and raising him in my arms, I managed to place him on his feet. He leaned on me, and tried to walk; but in vain: he fell once more, dragging me with him.

"Jobin," said he, "tis all over. Just leave me here, and join your column as quickly as you can. One word before you go—at Vorepe, near Grenoble, lives a good woman, eighty-two years old, my—my mother. Go to see her, embrace her, and tell her that—that tell her whatever you like, but give her this purse and my cross. That's all."

"In that all, captain?"

"I said so. Good-by, and make haste."

"Boys, I don't know how it was, but I felt two tears freezing on my cheeks."

"No, captain," cried I, "I won't leave you: either you shall come with me, or I will stay with you."

"I forbid your staying."

"Captain, you might just as well forbid a woman talking."

"If I escape, I'll punish you severely."

"You may place me under arrest then, but just now, you must let me do as I please."

"You're an insolent fellow!"

"Very likely, captain; but you must come with me."

"He bit his lips with anger, but said no more. I raised him, and placed his body across my shoulders like a sack. You may easily imagine that while bearing such a burthen I could not move as quickly as my comrades. Indeed I soon lost sight of their columns, and could perceive nothing but the white silent plain around me. I moved on, and presently there appeared a band of Cossacks galloping towards me, their lances in rest, and shouting their fiendish war-cry.

The captain was by this time in a state of total unconsciousness, and I resolved, cost what it might, not to abandon him. I laid him on the ground, covered him with snow, and then crept under a heap of my dead comrades, leaving, however, my eyes at liberty. Soon the Cossacks reached us, and began striking with their lances right and left, while their horses trampled the bodies. Presently one of these rude beasts placed his hoof on my left arm and crushed it in pieces. Boys, I did not say a word; I did not move, save to thrust my right hand into my mouth to keep down the cry of torture; and in a few minutes the Cossacks dispersed.

"When the last of them had ridden off, I crept out and managed to disinter the captain. He showed few signs of life; nevertheless I contrived with my one hand to drag him towards a rock, which afforded a sort of shelter, and then lay down next him, wrapping my capote around us. Night was closing in, and the snow continued to fall. The last of the rearguard had long disappeared, and the only sounds that broke the silence were the whistling of distant bullets, and the nearer howling of the wolves, which were devouring the dead bodies. God knows what things were passing through my mind that night, which, I felt assured, would be my last on earth. But I remembered the prayer my mother had taught me long ago when I was a child by her side; and kneeling down, I said it fervently.

"Boys, it did me good; and always remember that sincere earnest prayer will do you good too. I felt wonderfully calm when I resumed my place next the captain. But time passed on, and I was becoming quite numb, when I saw a party of French officers approaching. Before I had time to address them, the foremost—a low-sized man, dressed in a fur pelisse—stepped towards me, saying, "What are you doing here? Why did you stay behind your regiment?"

"For two good reasons," said I, pointing first to the captain, and then to my bleeding arm.

"The man speaks the truth, sire," said one of his followers. "I saw him marching behind the column carrying this officer on his back."

"The Emperor—for, boys, it was he!—gave me one of those looks which only himself or an Alpine eagle could give, and said, "Tis well. You have done very well." Then opening his pelisse, he took the cross which decorated his inside green coat, and gave it me. That moment I was no longer cold or hungry, and felt no more pain in my arm than if that ill-nurtured beast had never touched it.

"Davoust," added the Emperor, addressing the gentleman who had spoken, "cause this man and his captain to be placed on one of the ammunition-wagons. Adieu!" And waving his hand towards me, he passed on.

Here the veteran paused, and resumed his pipe.

"But tell us about the cross, and what became of Captain Positive," cried several impatient voices.

"The captain still lives, and is now a retired general. But the best of it was, that as soon as he recovered, he placed me under arrest for fifteen days, no punishment for my breach of discipline! The circumstance reached Napoleon's ears; and after laughing heartily, he not only released me, but promoted me to be a sergeant. As to the decoration, here is the ribbon, boys: I wear that in my button-hole, but the cross I carry next my heart! And unbuttoning his coat, the veteran showed his young friends the precious relic, enveloped in a little satin bag suspended round his neck.

LEAF-GOLD AND PAPER-SHAVINGS.

Some idea may be formed of the extent of the London bookbinding trade in the nineteenth century, when we state that the weekly consumption of leaf-gold, enriching the exterior of books, amounts to about 3,600,000 square inches; and that the weight of paper-shavings sold annually by the London binders, cut off the edges of books, amounts to 350 tons!—*Illustrated Historic Times.*

The present number of the Journal completes the eleventh volume (new series), for which a title-page and index have been prepared, and may be had of the publishers and their agents.

END OF ELEVENTH VOLUME.

